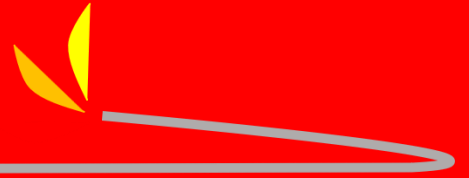


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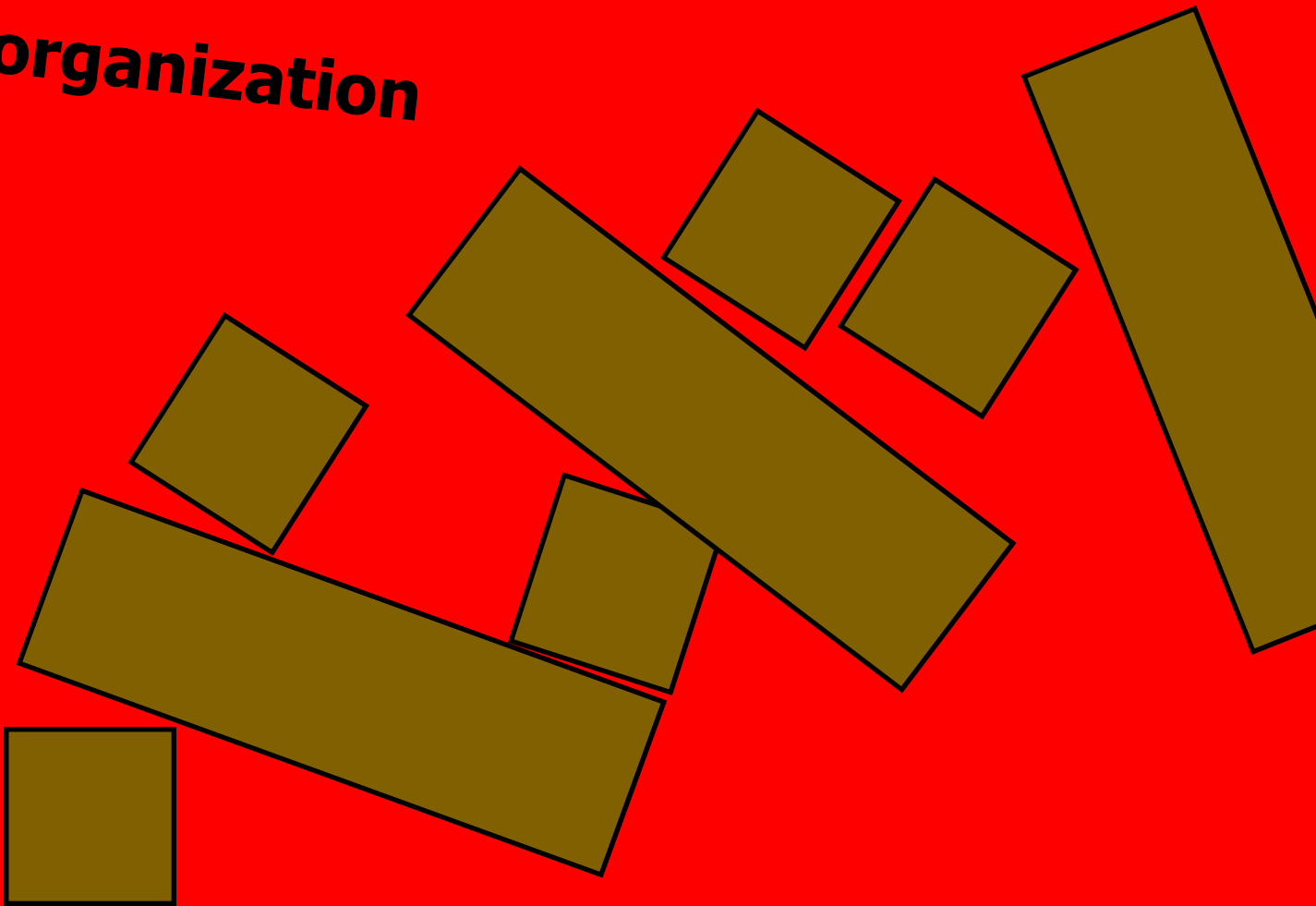


Talossa's Magazine of Everything

Structured to Fail

Cautionary Tales of Talossan

organization



Volume IV

September 2019



Talossa's Magazine of Everything

Ian Plätschisch, Editor in Chief

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Structured to Fail - Cautionary Tales of Talossan Organization

Ian Plätschisch

Talossa needs to take a long, hard look at the rules governing many of our institutions.

There has been much complaining recently about the ability of some people to effectively “veto” new initiatives simply by not engaging with them. Of course, such lack of engagement need not be intentional (there are plenty of reasons why a Talossan may need to take a leave of absence), but the fact remains that there are several areas of Talossan life that are subject to the oversight of a person or body that either is no longer interested or capable of providing that oversight or never served anything but an overly bureaucratic role in the first place.

From this description, it may appear that anarchy is the best way to operate our civil institutions. After all, if any citizen could act unilaterally, no one would ever need someone else’s approval and we would all be free to use the avenues of Talossan culture how we saw fit. However, besides turning Talossa into a “bathtubbia” subject to radical reformulations on a weekly basis, this policy would have another subtle but no less important drawback. Any time a group of citizens might seek consensus to ensure a proposed change became widely accepted, there would be no indication of when, or if, that consensus was obtained. This would cause either progressively worse fracturing of our organizations, and a loss of unity and consistency in our nation, as change-makers went ahead without a way to make their new policies official, or a permanent stasis if no one was willing to move forward on anything without the express consent of all imaginable stakeholders, some of whom may not even be contactable. Unfortunately, examples of this kind of governance are not rare in Talossa.

Therefore, both too many and too few organizational procedures can be quite detrimental. To illustrate these concepts, I present a few case studies.

Provincial Governments

For almost two years between 2017 – 2019, Florencia floundered in a catch-22 that prevented it from seating either a Governor or the Nimlet (provincial assembly). In early 2017, the existing Governor failed to apportion the seats in the upcoming Nimlet, which, according to the Florencian Constitution, necessitated the appointment of a new Governor. However, no new Governor could be appointed since the Governor is Constitutionally required to be a member of the Nimlet, which could not assemble because only the new Governor could apportion the seats. It took months of complaining and multiple legal consultations for the province to finally decide that the situation was dumb and that following the strict letter of the law was not tenable.

Too few regulations can also spell doom for a provincial government. When the Maricopan Cabana assembled for the 51st Cosa, it made no progress on the election of the Premier between January 6th and April 4th, 2018, as there was no designated time frame for the election nor was it clear who had the authority to conduct it. On April 4th, one of the candidates, who had not heard anything from the other candidate during this time, declared himself the winner, at which point the other candidate suddenly reappeared and objected that no one had yet proposed a deadline for submitting nominations to the post. The two agreed to hold an election; alas, they were the only

two voters and at the end of the agreed-upon voting period there was a 1-1 tie. The result was the same after an extension, and the sitting Premier (who was one of the candidates) then declared he intended to stay in office indefinitely, and only agreed to further deadline extensions after a citizen from a different province criticized his decision. The deadlock continued for the rest of the term.

The Arvitieir Prima of Benito, supposed to function as a provincial Secretary of State, serves in practice only to officially open and close votes on bills before the Assembly. The delay between a request by an Assemblyperson for the Arvitieir Prima to put a bill up for a vote and the Arvitieir Prima acting on that request is typically fairly short but has recently been up to a month. Assuming the proper regulations were put in place outlining how a bill may be put up for a vote, there is nothing the Arvitieir Prima does that could not be done by an individual Assemblyperson. Therefore, there is no reason for this extra link in the chain that does not add any value and can only introduce delays.

Talossan Language

The CUG is the traditional governing body of the Talossan language. However, almost none of its members are involved anymore, and if there ever were regulations regarding a quorum, they certainly have not been met in a long time. Unfortunately for the language, there are many questions of orthography that must be dealt with, and every time a group of speakers try to hammer things out, they ultimately can never get anywhere because they have no authority to make decisions. Of course, they could just decide to adopt their proposals themselves, but they have been understandably reluctant to do so given the schism it would cause.

Faced with the dormancy of the CUG, some citizens created a new language organization called SIGN with the encouragement of the Minister of Culture. However, a member of the CUG warned that its creation might divide the language community. The two groups held talks on how to integrate or cooperate, but with no mechanism to decide how to ultimately proceed, SIGN withered and the CUG returned to the hibernation from which it had arisen.

Uppermost Cort

El Lexhatx puts the Clerk of Corts in charge of administering the Cort. This might work well if the Clerk were consistently active, but Clerks have generally not been active for most of the position's history. If the law were followed, this would make it very difficult to conduct any legal business. However, for the past several years, parties to cases and Justices alike have essentially agreed to pretend the position of Clerk does not exist and handle all administration themselves. This has allowed the Cort to function, although it does so in a make-it-up-as-we-go manner that no one quite understands and is ripe for future controversy.

College of Arms

Both the Squirrel Viceroy of Arms and the Dean of the College of Arms must approve a prospective armiger before a fellow of the College can start designing the arms. The process has gotten significantly faster now that the Viceroy, Dean, and most active fellow are all the same

person, but there is still little reason for all these hoops when the King already has the authority to halt a request for arms any time he desires.

We have to learn from these observations how to build lasting organizational structures that both describe exactly how business may be conducted and that do not rely too much on a single person or group. Additionally, we must eliminate as many purely bureaucratic roles as possible and devolve the corresponding responsibilities and privileges to everyone involved.

Luckily, these strategies have been implemented in some places, and they can serve as guides for future reform:

- In the Assembly of Maritiimi-Maxhestic, any member can call and end a vote on a matter so long as they do so in accordance with the relevant law detailing the appropriate voting period and venue.
- Current efforts to streamline the Judiciary by introducing Justices of the Peace to handle small disputes will eliminate much of the judicial bureaucracy and codify what remains.
- Until its repeal earlier this term, the section of el Lexhatx describing Naval regulations was one of the least-used and most unnecessary portions of Talossan law. It elicited a mild chuckle out of its readers, but in effect gave the Ziu control over every minute detail of the Navy. Therefore, the citizens who were interested in the Navy felt as though they could not take initiatives without the approval of the Ziu, but most the of the Ziu could not have cared less about the Navy. By repealing almost all of that section and replacing it with a code of regulations promulgated by those most involved with the Navy, we devolved power to those who are most capable and most motivated to use it to advance Talossan interests and culture.

Implementing these suggestions may not seem like a very important step in combatting the Kingdom's activity problem, given that there is nothing so common in Talossa as restructuring proposals that do nothing to increase participation in whatever is being restructured. Still, we depend on the robust operation of our institutions to engage in everything else that attracts people to Talossa. A failure here will, and has already started to, decrease confidence and enthusiasm in the rest of our society, so it's time to give the gears the attention they deserve.

TalossAnalysis: Markov Chains and the Talossan Music Top 20

Ian Plätschisch

Each year around election time, Talossans vote on their favorite songs in the Talossan Music Top 20. It has been hosted five times since 2015 and, though the format has varied slightly from year to year, includes between 120 and 150 songs competing for a ranking in that year's Top 20. Some songs get to the Top 20 several years in a row, while others are included a single year and then fail to ever get there again. This leads us to the question; given that a song was included in the previous Top 20, what is the probability that it will also be in the Top 20 the next year? What

is the probability that a song that was not in the Top 20 last year will be in it the next year? This question can be answered by using the data from previous competitions to create Markov Chains.

A Markov Chain describes the probabilities of transitioning from one state to another state. In this case, one state is “in the Top 20” and the other state is “not in the Top 20.” At each competition, each song can either stay at the same state or switch to the other one. The following table gives these probabilities:

		<u>NEXT YEAR</u>	
		RANKED	UNRANKED
<u>PREVIOUS YEAR</u>	RANKED	38.75%	61.25%
	UNRANKED	10.65%	89.35%

For example, a song that was ranked in the Top 20 last year has a 38.75% chance of being ranked again the next year. An unranked song has only a 10.65% chance of being ranked the next year.

However, what if we break it down further? For example, a song ranked between #1 and #5 may have a higher change of being in next year’s Top 20 than a song ranked between #16 and #20. The following table gives these probabilities:

		<u>NEXT YEAR</u>	
		RANKED	UNRANKED
<u>PREVIOUS YEAR'S RANK</u>	RANK 1 - 5	60%	40%
	RANK 6 - 10	40%	60%
	RANK 11 - 15	20%	80%
	RANK 16 - 20	35%	65%

Songs in the top five ranks have a better than even chance of being in the Top 20 again next year, while songs ranked between 11-15 have only a 20% chance. Curiously, songs ranked between 6-10 and 16-20 have similar likelihoods of being in the Top 20 again the next year.

It is possible to get even more detailed. What if, instead of simply predicting whether the song will be in the Top 20, we predicted where in the Top 20 it will be ranked?

		<u>NEXT YEAR'S RANK</u>				
		RANK 1 - 5	RANK 6 - 10	RANK 11 - 15	RANK 16 - 20	UNRANKED
<u>PREVIOUS YEAR'S RANK</u>	RANK 1 - 5	35.00%	15.00%	5.00%	5.00%	40.00%
	RANK 6 - 10	5.00%	10.00%	10.00%	15.00%	60.00%
	RANK 11 - 15	5.00%	10.00%	0.00%	5.00%	80.00%
	RANK 16 - 20	0.00%	10.00%	10.00%	15.00%	65.00%
	UNRANKED	2.39%	2.39%	3.26%	2.61%	89.35%

Songs in the top five have a 35% chance of being ranked in the top five again the next year. Songs ranked between 6-10 and between 11-15 have a 5% being ranked in the top five the next year, while a song ranked between 16-20 has never been ranked in the top five the next year.

Dals Quotaziuns par Salvor Hardin

Translated by Iac Marscheir

Salvor Hardin is a character in Isaac Azimov's *Foundation* series.

“La violensà isch la lasta refüxha dels incompetents.”

“Evidarh put aßistarh, specealter schi si tent ‘n reputaziun da subtzilità.”

“‘N menxheir à féu fost menxharh del féu, misma schi o fost en enfëuçarh.”

“‘N blästeir àd atom isch ‘n ben vöpneu, mas ça put estarh entócat embù vejs.”

“Per riuschlarh, solamint planarh non isch aßei. Si fost ocsa improviçarh.”

“Solamint ‘n lögneu qi non isch ruschinat povadra pouçivalmint riuschlarh.”

“Níþil fost estarh vräts, mas toct fost cuntinarh vräts.”

“Laßetz txamais tu valours t’impedent da façarh qet’st drept!”

End Matter

La S’chinteia is always hiring! If you want to write it, La S’chinteia wants to publish it. Get in touch with Ian Plätschisch if you would like to become a contributor (no set schedule, publish as many or as few times as you want) or staff writer. No experience required.

If you...

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- Want to join our email list to get early access to new volumes
- Would like to get in touch with La S’chinteia for some other reason

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Thanks for reading!